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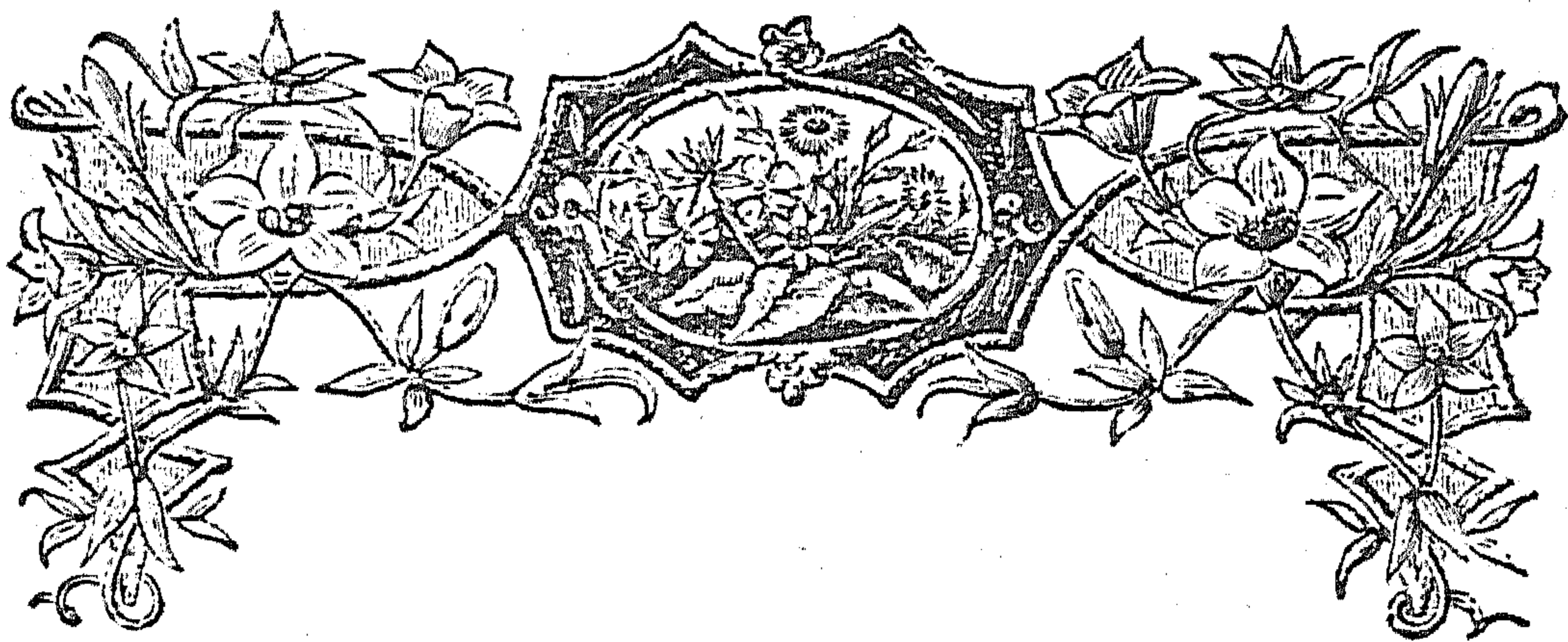
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[No. 80.]



WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.

BY BOSTWICK HAWLEY, D.D.

THE privileges and duties of Christian women in the Church are worthy of careful consideration. If they are forbidden in the Scriptures to speak, and are commanded to keep silence in the Church, it is well to know it. On this subject there is a wide diversity of opinion, some giving to them great latitude, others restricting them to the letter of our version of the Scriptures. Their qualifications for speaking and praying effectively none denies. In tenderness, pathos, and in

social virtues they are often superior to men, as they are their equals in Christian experience and practical usefulness. Constituting by far the greater part of the Church, they should not be debarred from any of their privileges, nor be inhibited from any of their duties.

I. What are the privileges of woman in the Church?

The word *Church* is derived from another that means *called out*, and designates, *first*, any assembly, (Acts xix, 32, 39, 41,) but generally and more properly in the Scriptures it designates those "called to be saints," who, belonging to the household of faith, have special privileges, as they are also placed under special restraints. The Church is a congregation of believers organized for worship, instruction, and for the use of its ordinances.

1. It is evident from the Scriptures that woman may *pray* in Church. In his first epistle to "the Church of God which is at
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Corinth" (xi, 4, 5, 13) the Apostle Paul gives advices in reference to "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth." The only restriction placed on her in assemblies for prayer is in reference to the covering of her head in the presence of men. The reasons given are, her relations to man, (xi, 7-12,) and the custom of that age and country. Verse 16. In this the apostolic Church followed the practice of the Hebrew Church. Hannah prayed in the temple in the presence of her husband and Eli the priest. 1 Sam. i, 24-28 ; ii, 1-10.

In the interim of ten days between the ascension and the pentecost the eleven apostles continued with one accord in *prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus.*" Acts i, 14.

2. Christian women may *prophesy* in the Church. Though the first meaning of this word is *to speak before, to foretell*, yet one of the chief functions of prophets, Jewish and Christian, was to expound the law and the precepts, to exhort and edify the people. The Apostle Paul says, "He that prophesieth

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speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." "He that prophesieth edifieth the Church." 1 Cor. xiv, 3, 4.

Having defined what it is to prophecy, he says to the whole Church at Corinth, (1 Cor. xiv, 5, 23, 24,) "I would that ye *all* spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied. . . . If, therefore, the *whole* church be come together in one place, and *all* speak with tongues. . . . But if *all* prophecy."

In this sense Miriam, (Exod. xv, 20,) Deborah, (Judg. iv, 4,) Huldah, (2 Kings xxii, 14,) Noadiah, (Neh. vi, 14,) and Anna, (Luke ii, 36,) publicly prophesied in the Church. Of Anna it is said that, coming into the temple where the child Jesus had been brought by his parents, she "*spake* of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Joel foretold that in the Christian age and under the direction of the Spirit both "sons and *daughters* shall prophecy." Joel ii, 28. After the Spirit had been poured out according to promise, "daughters and handmaidens" did prophecy. Acts ii, 16-18. In the line of these prophe-

cies, whose fulfillment was thus signally begun, the four daughters of Philip the evangelist prophesied in the presence of Paul, abiding for a time in their house at Cesarea. Acts xxi, 8, 9.

Doubtless Phebe, "a servant of the Church at Cenchrea," Priscilla, a "helper in Christ Jesus," Mary, "who bestowed much labor," Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis, "who labor in the Lord," (Rom. xvi, 1-12,) were intelligent and useful prophetesses.

4. Christian women who, like deaconesses and Bible readers, have the ability, may privately and socially expound the Scriptures. Priscilla with her husband, hearing Apollos speak in the synagogue at Ephesus, "took him . . . and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Acts xviii, 26. The fact of the resurrection of Christ was first publicly announced to the disciples by Mary. Matt. xxviii, 7-9.

II. What are the relations and duties of Christian women in the Church?

1. As to their relations, the Apostle Paul

teaches that "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord;" and that "as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman."

1 Cor. xi, 11, 12. In the Lord the relations of men and women are somewhat mutual. Each may be of service to the other. The distinctions of sex are lost in Christian oneness: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii, 26, 28.

2. In common with others, it is the *duty* of Christian women to "confess with the mouth unto salvation," (Rom. x, 10; Matt. x, 32,) and to so sing as to *speak*, and *teach*, and *admonish* one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Eph. v, 19; Col. iii, 16. In these and similar acts of social and public worship women have the same privileges and duties as men, but always in the submission and love of wives and husbands. Eph. v, 21-31.

III. May Christian women, though having
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“gifts, grace, and usefulness,” *preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments?*

1. In the New Testament there are but two words (*euangelizō* and *keerussō*) that designate preaching: one signifies *to proclaim*; the other *to announce good news, to evangelize, to preach the Gospel*. In composition with certain prepositions these and two or three other words are sometimes translated *preach*, when they in fact mean *dispute, converse, and social discoursing*. But they never designate ministerial offices nor preaching functions performed by women.

2. We are now brought to the consideration of the prohibitions and injunctions of “women in the Churches.” In the Greek the words which express them are much more definite than in our translation. There are three different words, each having its own meaning, that are translated “speak.” One of these (*epō*) means *to say* something; another (*legō*) *to tell* something; the third, (*laleō*), though often used in the general sense of speaking, means *to speak carelessly, to talk*

much, to prattle. Its precise idea is to be determined by its limitations and its association with other words. When Paul designates the province of woman or wife in the Church, keeping in mind her relations to her husband, of whom she can make inquiries "at home" in reference to ecclesiastical matters, he uses this last-mentioned word. 1 Cor. xiv, 34, 35. That it here does not refer to prayer nor to prophesying, nor to confessing Christ in Christian assemblies, is clear from the fact that the apostle refers in the same sentence to the obligations of woman to her husband, "as saith the law" in Gen. iii, 16; Num. xxx, 3, 12; Esth. i, 20; Eph. v, 22-25; that he uses a word that means *wives*; and that, in reference to the affairs of the Church in debate, he refers them to their husbands *at home*.

3. In the New Testament are five wholly different words, not synonymous, that are translated *teach*. One (*matheteuō*) means to make and instruct disciples; *paideuō* means to educate a child; *didaskō* means to teach as

a master, an instructor having authority to teach publicly. Our Lord used the first when he said to his apostles, "Go, *teach* all nations, baptizing them." Here it evidently expresses ministerial functions. In the sense of the last named Christ and his apostles taught, and his ministers teach with authority. Now, this is the emphatic word used in 1 Tim. ii, 12, "I suffer not a woman [wife] to TEACH, nor to usurp authority over the man, [husband.] She is here inhibited from any and every position and official relation that involves authority and teaching in the Church. She may pray, prophesy, and be a Bible reader, but she may not assume the office of a preacher nor the functions of a minister. Whoever does it transcends apostolic authority.

4. In reference to Church matters, of which they can "learn at home," Christian women are required *to keep silence*. 1 Cor. xiv, 34. This word (*sigatōsan*) expresses a silence from dispute, debate, clamor. It does not enjoin utter silence in a religious assembly, but only such as comports with conjugal relations and

due subjection, and as allows prayer and prophesying to edification.

Another word (*esuchia*) is used in 1 Tim. ii, 11, 12, whose primary meaning is *quietness, stillness, rest*, rather than a restless insubordination, or an assumption of authority over man. The plain meaning of the apostle is that women, particularly wives, should, in public worship and in ecclesiastical matters, keep that quietness which is suitable to their relations and position. They should not be public teachers in any such sense as makes them superior to, or co-ordinate with, men divinely called to the ministry, nor should they assume authority in Christian Churches, but should be quiet, in subjection, not disputers, and should express their opinions "at home." The word used to denote respectful silence is *sigeē*, from *sigaoō*, to keep silent, as in Acts xxi, 40, and Rev. viii, 1.

The entire tenor of the Scriptures is in harmony with the foregoing statements. The history and usages of the Church confirm them. Good scholars, who examine the sub-

ject, know them to be in accord with the genius of Christianity, as they are with the special instructions of the Apostle Paul.

The conclusions reached are:—

1. That woman is, in the Scriptures, permitted and encouraged *to pray* in religious assemblies “with the spirit and with the understanding,” and “*to speak* to edification, exhortation, and comfort.”

2. She may act the part of a deaconess and of a helper in the Lord, and in such like ways be a colaborer with man in the ordinary, yet effective and useful, duties of Christians.

3. She should not be clothed with ministerial functions, should not preach, nor should she so teach as to exercise authority over men.

4. She may not take official positions nor relations in the Church which in any way relieve her from that subjection taught in the Scriptures, such as ordination, nor installation to the pastoral office.

5. Whatever relation she hold and position she occupy should be in due regard to her

divinely-arranged associations with men in both domestic and public life.

Some of the advices given by St. Paul to Christian women have special reference to those times and people; but the restrictions imposed are founded in their physical and mental constitution, their social relations, and their domestic duties. They are in harmony with the nature of things.

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